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C O N F I D E N T I A L MONTEVIDEO 000027

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2020/02/19

TAGS: PGOV PREL ETRD CVIS UY

SUBJECT: Uruguay: Incoming Foreign Minister Sends Positive Signals

REF: MONTEVIDEO 23 AND PREVIOUS

CLASSIFIED BY: David Nelson, Ambassador, State, Exec REASON: 1.4(B),  
(D)

Summary

**¶1.** (C) Ambassador Nelson called on incoming Foreign Minister Luis Almagro February 19. The two shared a warm and friendly ninety minutes discussing Uruguay's role in regional and international affairs, with Almagro stressing his understanding of the necessity of active U.S. participation in any well-functioning multilateralism. Almagro sent other positive signals on climate change and the Pathways initiative, encouraged discretion and speed in managing the U.S. visa issues of Uruguay's new leadership, and appealed for help for Uruguay's wool textile industry. Almagro and the ambassador agreed to maintain open and frequent communications. End Summary.

Regional/Multilateral Cooperation

**¶2.** (C) The ambassador thanked Almagro for Uruguay's cooperation on regional and multilateral issues, adding that the U.S. understands and welcomes Uruguay's desire to boost its presence and visibility on the international stage (e.g., by seeking a seat at the UNSC for 2015-16). Ambassador Nelson explained that a consequence of the sort of international vocation that Uruguay is demonstrating is that we will often approach his overworked and understaffed MFA with demarches about issues of importance around the globe. Almagro made clear that he welcomes any chance to understand our views, saying that he and his ministry will always listen carefully to anything the U.S. has to say. Uruguay is a strong believer in the importance of multilateralism, Almagro continued, and effective multilateralism is impossible without U.S. participation. Almagro highlighted his commitment to human rights issues in international fora.

A New Face Earns Respect

**¶3.** (C) Referring to unhelpful comments made last month by incoming Minister of Defense Luis Rosadilla about U.S. participation in the Haiti relief effort, Almagro told the ambassador that he had addressed the issue during a meeting of President-elect Mujica's security cabinet February 10. According to Almagro, he noted his

concerns about other cabinet ministers speaking out on foreign policy issues, asserting himself, apparently without dissent, as Mujica's foreign policy spokesperson. Almagro suggested and encouraged open and frequent communications with the ambassador on all relevant matters.

Pathways Ministerial

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¶4. (C) Almagro apologized to Ambassador Nelson because he will not be able to attend the Pathways ministerial in San Jose March 4-5. Instead, Almagro will be sending in newly-sworn-in Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Roberto Conde. Almagro's predecessor, Foreign Minister Pedro Vaz, had directed the MFA to develop a Pathways proposal to allow Uruguay to share its successful experience with the "'One-Laptop-per-Child'" program. Almagro told the ambassador that while Uruguay intends to pursue that proposal, he is also thinking about another relating to Uruguay's strong commitment to freedom of the press. That, said Almagro, is also worthy of emulation and suitable for sharing with the region.

Visas

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¶5. (C) The ambassador told Almagro that we will always encourage and welcome visits of Uruguayan cabinet ministers to the U.S., adding that U.S. visa law will sometimes offer complications to Uruguayan government officials, including President Mujica, whose pasts include armed insurrection. The ambassador promised Almagro that we will handle all sensitive visa applications with total discretion, and asked for understanding of our laws and processes. The news that even an application by President Mujica would require special processing brought a demonstration of disquiet by Almagro, and the discussion ended with Almagro endeavoring to encourage Uruguayan officials to apply as far in advance of any U.S. trip as possible, and the ambassador promising that the Embassy and Department will facilitate the process to the best of our ability.

Market Access for Uruguayan Textiles

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¶6. (SBU) Almagro described the plight of the beleaguered Uruguayan wool textile industry, and asked the ambassador about the possibilities that Uruguayan wool would one day be included in a preferential regime. Almagro was aware that Senator Lugar had supported the possibility of Uruguay's inclusion in a restructured Andean Trade Preference Program. The Ambassador explained that the ATPDEA was extended for one year in December 2009, but Uruguay was not included.

Climate Change

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¶7. (SBU) The ambassador thanked Almagro for Uruguay's timely association with the Copenhagen Accord. Almagro stressed Uruguay's intention to play a positive role with regard to climate change, which he described as a personal as well as professional interest, and to collaborate as closely as possible with the U.S. in this area. Almagro particularly welcomed joint efforts in alternative energy.

Comment

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¶8. (C) Almagro has enjoyed a rapid rise to prominence within the MFA, as his association with President-elect Mujica's political movement and time as foreign policy advisor to Mujica when Mujica was minister of agriculture allowed him to move him past more senior career officials. He is not someone with whom U.S. officials have had a lot of interaction, so we were not expecting the warmth with which he received the ambassador. The meeting went much longer than expected, and Almagro seemed keen to have us understand that he wants to maintain an excellent bilateral relationship.

Nelson